

6

Communication 2:

Family Meetings

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the session, participants will:

- be able to describe a “family meeting”
- know the importance of family meetings
- understand the concept of family jobs/household tasks.

SESSION OUTLINE

	MINUTES	MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS
1. Review home activity	15	
2. Skill review	10	flipchart, markers
3. Family meetings		
a. Introduction to family meetings	5	
b. Why hold family meetings?	10	flipchart, markers Handout 6A: <i>Family Meetings Are Important Because . . .</i>
c. Barriers to holding family meetings	5	flipchart, markers
4. Family jobs	10	flipchart, markers
5. What we learned	3	
6. Home activity	2	

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT . . .

Family Meetings

The principle behind family meetings is for all members to have an opportunity to raise issues and present their points of view on the topics discussed, and to work out satisfactory solutions together. It is a time when family members come together to share and discuss joys, milestones, issues and concerns. Family meetings also present a good opportunity to work out schedules for the week ahead, to itemize what needs to be done and to negotiate who will do what.

Family meetings provide a forum for parents and children to use the knowledge and skills they have learned in previous sessions. Meetings are more likely to run smoothly, and everyone is more likely to stick with decisions, if parents:

- take on appropriate roles and responsibilities
- have reasonable expectations of their children
- pay positive attention (e.g., say kind words, give praise) to their children
- use communication (speaking and listening) skills.

Family Jobs

In North American society, it is the norm for adults to assume responsibility for the household. This means that adults (whether there is one or more than one in the household) have to take on the majority of the household tasks. However, it is important for children to be given the opportunity to contribute to their household in a significant way. It tells them that they are an important part of the family and that their family work is real and necessary to help the household run smoothly. Children's family work can be a learning experience—a chance to gain new skills and to experience the rewards of a job well done.

Children can and should participate in family jobs. The general expectation is that the younger children are, the simpler the tasks they are assigned. As children get older they can take on more responsibility within the household. Another important part of children's work is learning to look after themselves independently. Note that families should be encouraged to allow both boys and girls to gain experience with many different tasks.

1. REVIEW HOME ACTIVITY

15 minutes

PURPOSE

- to have the group discuss and reflect on the home activity, which was to:
 - practise communication (speaking and listening) skills with their children
 - keep track of discussions with their children using Handout 5E: *Communication*.

PROCEDURE

- Ask the group how things went when they practised using communication (speaking and listening) skills with their children. If necessary, prompt discussion about new communication skills by asking the following questions:
 - *Does this style of communication feel different than your usual ways of talking?*
 - *Does this way of interacting (speaking and listening) feel unnatural?*
 - *Was it hard to not interrupt the speaker?*
 - *Did you use “I” messages and try to accept others’ viewpoints without judging them?*

2. SKILL REVIEW

10 minutes

PURPOSE

- to remind participants of the previously discussed skills and concepts covered in sessions 1 to 5

PROCEDURE

- Ask participants what skills they have learned to date.
- Record the discussion on the flipchart.

**Flipchart
Markers**

NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS: For a general review and summary of the skills, see Handout 12C.

3. FAMILY MEETINGS

5 minutes

3a. Introduction to family meetings

PURPOSE

- to describe family meetings and learn how to use them to deal with issues that arise within the family

PROCEDURE

- Remind the group that the topic of family meetings was introduced during the last family session.
- Explain to the group that good communication is an important part of family meetings:
 - *Throughout the program, we have been developing better ways to talk to each other in general, and also to talk to one another about sensitive issues. This kind of positive communication is more likely to happen when families hold regular “family meetings,” because it allows family members to work through issues together in a supportive way.*
 - *Some families may already hold family meetings. A family meeting is a gathering of family members to talk about things. Family meetings can be formal, with someone taking notes, or more informal, like a discussion at the dinner table. Is anyone familiar with this idea of family meetings? Do any of your families already do an informal version of this around dinner or bedtime? How do you think families find the time?*
 - *Family meetings are important because they can help build a strong and supportive family. The next activity will help us to discuss other advantages of having family meetings.*
- For background information on this topic, see *Family Meetings* under *What You Need to Know About . . .*

10 minutes

3b. Why hold family meetings?

PURPOSE

- to outline the benefits of holding regular family meetings

PROCEDURE

- Explain that there are a number of reasons why family meetings help to strengthen the family and increase the co-operation and competence of children.

- Ask the group if they can identify any of these reasons, and record points mentioned by the group on the flipchart.
- Once the group has generated a number of reasons, refer to the points listed on Handout 6A: *Family Meetings Are Important Because . . .*, if they have not already been covered.

**Flipchart
Markers
Handout 6A**

3c. Barriers to holding family meetings

5 minutes

PURPOSE

- to have the group identify barriers to holding family meetings, and determine ways to overcome the barriers

PROCEDURE

- Ask the group if they can foresee any barriers to holding family meetings; write their responses on the flipchart.
- Have the group problem-solve each of the responses listed on the flipchart.

**Flipchart
Markers**

4. FAMILY JOBS

10 minutes

PURPOSE

- to have participants understand that adults normally assume responsibility for the household and household tasks
- to have participants understand that children can learn new skills and make a contribution to the household, but that the child's main job is to play
- to have family members clarify responsibilities for household tasks

PROCEDURE

- Ask parents to list jobs that are necessary to run a household.
- List the jobs on the flipchart.
- Ask participants:
How can children make a contribution?
- Identify household jobs that children are capable of doing.

**Flipchart
Markers**

NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS: In doing this exercise, you may wish to refer back to Session 2: *Developmental Stages*.

3 minutes

5. WHAT WE LEARNED

PURPOSE

- to remind parents of the key concepts they learned during this session
- to prepare the group for the family session
- to prepare the group for the home activity

PROCEDURE

- Have the group summarize the most important points brought out during the session:
 - Good communication is an important part of family meetings.
 - There are a number of benefits to holding regular family meetings.

2 minutes

6. HOME ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

- to ask parents to practise the skills they learned during the session

PROCEDURE

- Ask parents to continue using the communication skills they have learned.
- Ask parents to hold a family meeting and to pay special attention to how they communicate during the meeting.